

LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION

MINUTES

July 2, 2015

Pat Manuel
CHAIRMAN

Dan Davis
VICE CHAIRMAN

BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

The following constitute minutes of the Commission Meeting
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Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
2000 Quail Drive
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70808.
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“AMENDED” AGENDA
LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION
BATON ROUGE, LA
July 2, 2015 9:30 AM

	PAGE
1. Roll Call	5
2. Approval of Minutes of June 4, 2015	5
3. Commission Special Announcements/Personal Privilege	5
4. To hear Enforcement Reports June 2015	6
5. To hear an update on the Spring Shrimp Season	8
6. To consider a Declaration of Emergency to allow the Secretary to set the 2015 Fall Shrimp Season if conditions require	8
7. To consider a Declaration of Emergency for Early Migratory Game Birds (Dove, Teal, Woodcock, Rail, and Gallinule) Hunting Seasons	13
8. To hear a Presentation on the effect of tidal flow through the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet on Lake Pontchartrain and its estuaries	23
9. Set November 2015 Meeting Date	26
10. Receive Public Comments	26
11. Adjournment	27

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF
LOUISIANA WILDLIFE AND FISHERIES COMMISSION

Thursday, July 2, 2015

Chairman Pat Manuel presiding

Present:

Pat Manuel

Dan Davis

Billy Broussard

Chad Courville

Bart Yakupzack

NOT Present:

Ronny Graham

Ed Swindell

Secretary Barham was present.

Deborah Marrs called roll.

Chairman Manuel called for a motion for approval of the **June 4, 2015 Commission Minutes**. A motion for approval was made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Broussard. Chairman Manuel called for a vote and the motion passed with no opposition.



For the agenda item, **Commission Special Announcements/Personal Privilege**,

Secretary Robert Barham advised that an Agreement in Principle has been reached with BP to settle the state and federal claims arising from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The announcement of that settlement was this morning. Although specific details cannot be discussed due to the Consent Decree, those final numbers will be worked out and signed off within the next 60 days, but it's a done deal. The anticipated total settlement is approximately \$18.73 billion, and \$6.8 billion is anticipated for Louisiana's claims. This Department will get the money that we need to do bird restoration, to do marine assessment and research, reaction and/or response to issues that arise from our research, etc. It was a tremendous settlement for the State of Louisiana.

Commissioner Manuel inquired whether we are going to get all the settlement money in one lump sum?

Secretary Barham responded that some of the money will come over 15 years, and it won't be equally spread over 15 years. The majority of the money will be early, but there will be money that will flow for the next 10 to 15 years.

Commissioner Davis advised that he wanted to commend two LDWF personnel, Fred Kimmel and John Sturgis, for doing a fine job at the Youth Hunter Education Challenge recently held at Camp Grant Walker in Pollock, LA. These two gentlemen went out of their way to put this together for all individuals including my granddaughter who was actually one of the participants. We had 30 kids attending the National Finals this week in New Mexico. Again, I want to commend Fred Kimmel and John Sturgis. These guys put forth a lot of time and effort, and do a great job in educating our youth.

There were no further comments or questions heard.



Chairman Manuel announced the next item, **To Hear Enforcement Reports for June**, to be presented by Lt Col. Martin.

There were 544 total cases for the month of June with 411 Written Warnings issued and 23 Public Assistance.

There were Eleven (11) boating accidents reported, Eleven (11) injuries and Two (2) Fatalities (both related to canoe/pirogue incidents where both individuals were not wearing a PFD).

Three (3) News releases were discussed:

Bowfishermen Guides Arrested For Deer and Alligator Violations in Plaquemines and Jefferson Parishes

After a Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Enforcement Division investigation, three men turned themselves into authorities for alleged deer and alligator violations in Plaquemines and Jefferson parishes.

On June 16, Blake A. Mitchell, 29, of Gretna, turned himself in to Jefferson and Plaquemines parish authorities. On June 17, Stephen Black, 19, of Slidell, and Neil Mitchell, 32, of Gretna turned themselves in to Jefferson Parish authorities.

The three men were arrested for failing to tag alligators, taking alligators from an unapproved area, taking alligators without a license, taking or possessing alligators during a closed season, and hunting or taking alligators at night. Blake Mitchell and Black were also cited for failing to comply with deer tagging requirements.

The case stems from an investigation into illegal commercial taking and pursuing of alligators for profit on guided bow fishing trips with Louisiana Bowfishing Inc. from 2013 to 2014. A search warrant was issued for Blake Mitchell's cell phone in May of 2015 after agents received information from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) agents of the illegal activity.

The phone contained photographs of Black taken by Mitchell with numerous alligators in Jefferson Parish. The photos included date stamps that were out of alligator season and GPS data from unapproved alligator hunting areas.

Through the investigation agents also found Neil Mitchell was involved in the illegal taking of alligators in Jefferson Parish and that Mitchell was conducting the same illegal alligator hunting practice in Plaquemines Parish. Interviews with customers also indicated the three men commonly take alligators illegally to generate more money.

The phone included photographs of deer killed in Plaquemines and Jefferson parishes that were not reported through the LDWF Deer Tagging Program as required by law.

Each count of failing to tag alligator, taking alligators from an unapproved area, taking or possessing alligators during a closed season, hunting/taking alligators at night brings up to a \$950 fine and 90 days in jail. Hunting alligators without a license carries up to a \$500 fine and 90 days in jail. Not abiding with deer tagging requirements brings up to a \$350 fine and 60 days in jail.

Agents participating in the case were Sgt. Adam Young, Senior Agent Joel Crompt and Agent Travis Bartlett along with USFWS Special Agents.

LDWF Agents Make Three DWI's on the Water during Operation Dry Water Weekend

In support of Operation Dry Water, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) arrested three boaters statewide for alleged driving or operating a vessel while intoxicated (DWI) from Friday, June 26 to Sunday, June 28.

On June 26 agents arrested Steven P. Sander Jr., 35, of Metairie, on Bayou Segnette in Jefferson Parish for DWI on the water. Agents also arrested Donald Lennox, 54, of Prairieville, on the Amite River Diversion Canal in Livingston Parish, and Jay B. Burchfield, 39, of Hammond, on North Pass in Tangipahoa Parish for DWIs on the water on June 27.

Louisiana had 18 boating fatalities in 2014 with alcohol playing a role in six fatalities or 33 percent. Nationwide, statistics from 2014 reveal that 21 percent of all boat incident fatalities listed alcohol as a contributing factor.

LDWF agents issued five DWI citations to boat operators during the 2014 Operation Dry Water weekend.

Impaired boaters caught this weekend can expect penalties to be severe. In Louisiana, a DWI on the water carries the same penalties and fines as on the road and includes jail time, fines and loss of driving and boating operator privileges.

Anyone cited for a DWI on the water or on the road will lose his or her driver's license and boating privileges for the specified time ordered by the judge in the case. Also, each offense of operating a vehicle or vessel while intoxicated counts toward the total number of DWI crimes whether they happened on the water or road.

In Louisiana a DWI can be issued to anyone operating a moving vessel or vehicle with a blood alcohol concentration of .08 or higher. First offense DWI carries a \$300 to \$1,000 fine and up to six months in jail.

Operation Dry Water was started in 2009 and is a joint program involving the LDWF/LED, the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) and the U.S. Coast Guard. More information is available at www.operationdrywater.org.

Authorities Rescue 113 People from Flooded Area in Grant Parish

Search and rescue teams from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), Grant Parish Sheriff's Office (GPSO) and the Louisiana Air National Guard (LANG) rescued 113 people from a flooded area in Grant Parish on June 14.

The search and rescue teams were alerted around 5 a.m. about stranded citizens following a private land levee breach on the Red River at Louisiana Mudfest just south of Colfax. Louisiana Mudfest is a private company that hosts all-terrain vehicle mud rides.

The majority of the Louisiana Mudfest property was submerged with quickly rising water leaving over 100 people stranded on a portion of high ground.

LDWF supplied eight agents with seven vessels and LANG provided air support. The GPSO assisted with coordinating the rescues and helping people onto boats.

A total of 113 people and three dogs were rescued by 10:30 a.m.

Commissioner Davis inquired about the bowfishing guides who were arrested. In addition to the monetary fines that can be imposed for the taking of the animals illegally, is there a statute that would remove their charter licenses after their conviction?

Lt. Col. Martin replied that if the Judge decides to impose that particular penalty, their charter licenses can be pulled. The Judge has to make that decision when they appear in court and the Department would be notified accordingly.

There were no further comments or questions heard.



Chairman Manuel announced the next item, **to hear an update on the Spring Shrimp Season**, to be presented by Jeff Marx.

Jeff Marx requested permission from Chairman Manuel to speak about the next two agenda items together, instead of separately, which includes: Agenda Item 5 (**to hear an update on the Spring Shrimp Season**) and Agenda Item 6 (**to consider a Declaration of Emergency to allow the Secretary to set the 2015 Fall Shrimp Season if conditions require**).

Chairman Manuel asked whether anyone had any objections to combining the next two Agenda Items 5 and 6, and there were no objections. Accordingly, Chairman Manuel announced that the next two items, **to hear an update on the Spring Shrimp Season** and **to consider a Declaration of Emergency to allow the Secretary to set the 2015 Fall Shrimp Season if conditions require**, to be presented by Jeff Marx.

Jeff Marx advised that this is one of the shortest spring seasons we've had on record. It was a 32-day season and very short. It closed June 19th for the majority of waters, and it will close today at 6:00 pm for a lot of the other areas. Prices on opening day were very poor and 80/100 count shrimp were going for 50/55 cents, 51/60 count shrimp were anywhere from 65 to 85 cents, and 16/20 count shrimp were \$1.70 to \$1.75. The prices towards the end of the season were a little bit higher. Some of the prices from the west end including Calcasieu/Cameron areas of 80/100 count shrimp were 75 cents, 51/60 count shrimp were 95 cents, and 16/20 count shrimp were \$2.00. So, we saw a little bump, but it was at the very end. There was an early pulse that we saw brown shrimp early in May, and that is sort of the reasoning for this Declaration of Emergency today. When the spring season opened, there were already small white shrimp showing up, but just not in huge numbers. The reports of them are from several different areas. We have already seen a pretty good pulse of white shrimp, which is the reason for this early closure. Now, basically, this is what we are trying to do with this Declaration of Emergency. We want to grant the authority in case before the August 2015 meeting, if there is enough evidence to open the season at that time. That is really what we're here for today.

Commissioner Davis commented that we have several shrimpers here today representing different facets of the industry. Again, it is a very complex industry and we are all quite aware of that. We have to remember what I said earlier, our objective is to protect the resources for future generations. Science is very important in this matter and economics plays some part of it too. Again, we want to do what is best for the resource and also bring science to the forefront. There are some very diverse issues regarding this, and we need to be open minded regarding all of them.

Jeff Marx advised that this is the reason for the proposed Declaration of Emergency. We are not saying that we are going to take action, but we want to have the authority in case there is a need while keeping all of our options open. In the event something happens, we can open it early.

Commissioner Davis inquired whether these proposals would be aligned with some of the closures this past month as half of the bay remained opened, and would some of those lines be right back and forth opening that first?

Jeff Marx replied that it's possible and it depends on what the biology shows.

Commissioner Broussard asked are there going to be established thresholds in the proposed Declaration of Emergency as to each region? He noted that the industry wants the opening at the same time and the issue with the Declaration of Emergency is we lose the opinions of the people in the industry. Would it be more appropriate for us to maybe utilize an emergency commission meeting? If we give the Secretary authority, my issue is that we won't have the voices of the people in the industry as to how they want it. Would it be more in line for us to have an emergency commission meeting?

Members from the public expressed their opinions including **Barry Rogers** from Terrebonne Parish. He advocated a statewide opening and anything else is un-environmental and an unfair practice. We need a sustainable shrimp fisheries in this industry. The environmentalists are coming down on us and watching every move we make. I'd like to see it close to the next commission meeting. White shrimp need to lay for our winter crop. If we harvest them now, we will have no winter season. We need to conserve our resources and make the most of what we have in the future. Additionally, **Dean Blanchard**, from Grand Isle spoke and advised he would like to see shrimp get a little bit bigger. We had a tough year for the fishermen. They did not make very much money. I'd like to see shrimp get a little bit bigger. The white shrimp were real short this year. In 2009, I bought 250,000 pounds of 16/20 white shrimp, shrimp that normally go within the \$2.50 to \$3.00 range. This year, we bought 12,000 pounds – 4 percent. So that is what kind of kills the smaller boats. If you catch 10 boxes of shrimp at 50 cents, that's \$500. But if you have 200 pounds at 250 shrimp, that's another \$500, so you've got \$1,000 for your nice work. What happened to them this year is they had \$500 on the little ones, but they only had about \$50 on the big ones. So, they were short on paying their fuel, ice, and expenses. Hopefully, Mother Nature is doing a little turn and trying to give us more white shrimp to make up for what we lost in the spring. I'd like to see them get at a bigger size so the guys can make more money and catch up. I appreciate what you're doing and thank you very much.

After further discussion and the Commission's desire to hear from the shrimp industry and other members of the public prior to setting the opening dates of the 2015 fall inshore shrimp season, a motion was made by Commissioner Broussard and seconded by Commissioner Davis, as more fully stated in the following Resolution, in directing the Department to immediately notify the Chairman upon making a reasonable determination of the date it will recommend for opening the fall inshore shrimp season. The Chairman will, within twenty-four (24) hours of notification, call a special meeting of the Commission, for the purpose of setting the opening date(s). Should the Chairman fail to call a special meeting or should the Commission not set the opening date at the special meeting, then the Commission authorizes the Secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to fix the opening dates of the 2015 Fall Shrimp Season in inside waters before the August 6, 2015 monthly Wildlife and Fisheries Commission meeting. The Commission also hereby grants authority to the Secretary to close any portion of Louisiana's inside waters to protect small juvenile white shrimp if biological and technical data indicate the need to do so, or enforcement problems develop.

Chairman Manuel called for a vote and the motion passed with no opposition.

There were no further comments or questions heard.

(The full text of the Resolution is
made a part of the record)

RESOLUTION

Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Wildlife and Fisheries Commission
July 2, 2015

WHEREAS, the emergency provisions of R.S. 49:953 of the Administrative Procedure Act allow the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission to use emergency procedures to set shrimp seasons and R.S. 56:497 provides that the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission shall fix no less than two open seasons each year for all or part of inside waters and shall have the authority to open or close outside waters and,

WHEREAS, the recommendations of the professional staff of the Department for the date of the opening of the fall inshore shrimp season is based on the determination that marketable shrimp, in sufficient quantities will be available for harvest on that date, and

WHEREAS, the professional staff of the Department recognizes it may determine that marketable shrimp, in sufficient quantities, will be available for harvest on a date prior to the August 2015 Commission meeting, and it may recommend an opening date for the 2015 fall inshore shrimp season prior to the August Commission meeting, and

WHEREAS, the Chairman has the authority to call a special meeting of the Commission, and

WHEREAS, R.S. 56:497 authorizes the Commission to delegate to the secretary the power, duties and authorities to fix open seasons for all or part of the state waters, and

WHEREAS, the Commission desires to hear from the shrimp industry and other members of the public prior to setting the opening dates of the 2015 fall inshore shrimp season.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission does hereby direct the Department to immediately notify the Chairman upon making a reasonable determination of the date it will recommend for opening the fall inshore shrimp season. The Chairman will, within twenty-four (24) hours of notification, call a special meeting of the Commission, for the purpose of setting the opening date(s).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that should the Chairman fail to call a special meeting or should the Commission not set the opening date at the special meeting, then the Commission authorizes the Secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to fix the opening dates of the 2015 Fall Shrimp Season in inside waters before the August 6, 2015 monthly Wildlife and Fisheries Commission meeting..

The Commission also hereby grants authority to the Secretary to close any portion of Louisiana's inside waters to protect small juvenile white shrimp if biological and technical data indicate the need to do so, or enforcement problems develop.



Edwin "Pat" Manuel

Chairman



Chairman Manuel announced the next item, **to consider a Declaration of Emergency for Early Migratory Game Birds (Dove, Teal, Woodcock, Rail, and Gallinule) Hunting Seasons**, to be presented by Dr. Jeff Duguay as more fully described in the following PowerPoint presentation.

Migratory Bird Seasons

**MOURNING DOVE
SEPTEMBER TEAL
RAILS
GALLINULES
AMERICAN WOODCOCK**



Dove General Framework

- Not more than 90 days
- Daily bag limit of 15 mourning and white-winged doves in the aggregate
- May have 2 zones
- Each zone not split into more than 3 periods

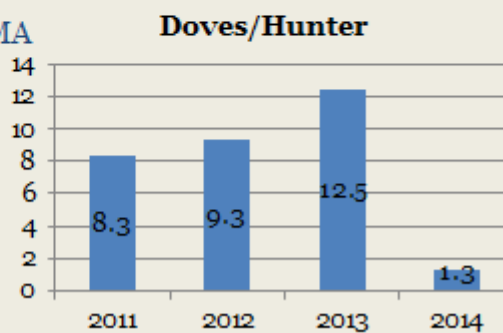
Dove Recommendations Cont.

- North Zone
 - September 5 – 27
 - October 10 – November 8
 - December 10 – January 15
- South Zone
 - September 5 – 13
 - October 10 – December 1
 - December 19 – January 15



Dove Opening Day Shooting Hours

- 1/2 hour before sunrise to sunset
 - Same as last year
- WMAs open at 12-noon
 - Same as last year
 - Except Elbow Slough WMA
 - Open 1/2 before sunrise



September Teal

- < 3.3 million = closed season
- 3.3 – 4.7 million = 9 day season
- > 4.7 million = 16 day season



September Teal

- Estimates will exceed 4.7 million
- September 12 – 27
- Daily bag limit 6 birds
- Possession limit 3x daily bag limit



Rails and Gallinules

- Split season statewide
 - 70 days
- September 12 – 27
- Remainder of season to be set in August with the duck regulations



Woodcock General Framework

- No more than 45 days hunting
 - Cannot hunt past January 31st
- Daily bag limit 3 birds
 - Possession limit 3x daily bag limit



Woodcock Recommendations

- December 18 – January 31 (45 days)
- Daily bag limit of 3 birds
 - Possession of 9 birds



Snipe

- Deferred to be set in August with the duck regulations



Extended Falconry Season

- Mourning Doves
 - September 13– September 29
- American Woodcock
 - October 28 – December 17
 - February 01 – February 11



There were no comments or questions heard.

A motion for approval was made by Commissioner Yakupzack and seconded by Commissioner Broussard. Chairman Manuel called for a vote and the motion passed with no opposition.

(The full text of the Declaration of Emergency is made a part of the record)

DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY
Early Season Migratory Bird Recommendations
2015-16 Seasons
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
Wildlife and Fisheries Commission
July 2, 2015

In accordance with the emergency provisions of R.S. 49:953 of the Administrative Procedure Act, and under authority of R.S. 56:115, the Secretary of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Wildlife and Fisheries Commission hereby adopts the following Emergency Rule.

The hunting seasons for early migratory birds during the 2015-2016 hunting season shall be as follows:

Dove: The term “dove” refers to the following species, and only the following species: mourning doves, white-winged doves, Eurasian collared-doves, and ringed-turtle doves.

Dove South Zone:

September 5 – 13

October 10 – December 1

December 19 – January 15

Dove North Zone:

September 5 – 27

October 10 – November 8

December 10 – January 15

Bag Limit: Mourning and white-winged doves and fully dressed Eurasian collared- and ringed turtle-doves: Daily bag limit 15 in aggregate, Possession 45 in aggregate, but note: there is no bag limit on Eurasian collared-doves or ringed turtle-doves provided that a fully feathered wing and head remain attached to the carcass of the bird. Fully dressed Eurasian-collared doves and ringed-turtle doves (those without a fully feathered wing and head naturally attached to the carcass) shall be included in the aggregate bag.

Dove Hunting Zones: The state shall be divided into North and South Dove Hunting Zones by the following boundary: Beginning at the Texas-Louisiana border on La. Highway 12; thence east along La. Highway 12 to its intersection with U.S. Highway 190; thence east along U.S. Highway 190 to its intersection with Interstate 12; thence east along Interstate 12 to its intersection with Interstate 10; thence east along Interstate 10 to the Mississippi state line.

Teal: September 12 - September 27

Daily bag limit 6, possession limit 18, blue-winged, green-winged and Cinnamon teal only. Federal and state waterfowl stamps required.

Rails: Split Season, Statewide, 70 days

September 12 - September 27

Remainder of season to be set in August with the duck regulations.

King and Clapper: Daily bag limit 15 in the aggregate and possession 45 in the aggregate.

Sora and Virginia: Daily bag limit 25 in the

Aggregate and possession 75 in the aggregate.

Gallinules: Split Season, Statewide, 70 days

September 12 - September 27

Remainder of season to be set in August with the duck regulations.

Common and Purple: Daily bag limit 15 in the aggregate, possession of

45 in the aggregate.

Woodcock: December 18 - January 31, Statewide

Daily bag limit 3, possession limit 9.

Snipe: Deferred to be set in August with the duck regulations.

Extended Falconry Season

Mourning Doves: Statewide

September 13 - September 29

Woodcock: Split Season, Statewide

October 28 - December 17

February 1 - February 11

Falconry daily bag and possession limits for all permitted migratory game birds must not exceed 3 and 9 birds, respectively, singly or in the aggregate, during the extended falconry seasons and regular hunting seasons. Remainder of extended falconry seasons for ducks, rails, gallinules to be set in August with the duck regulations.

Shooting and Hawking Hours:

Dove: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset. Except opening day on WMA properties only, open at 12:00 noon. With the exception of Elbow Slough WMA which is to open one-half hour before sunrise on opening day.

Teal, rails, gallinules, and woodcock: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset.

A Declaration of Emergency is necessary because the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service establishes the framework for all migratory species. In order for Louisiana to provide hunting opportunities to the 100,000 sportsmen, selection of season dates, bag limits, and shooting hours must be established and presented to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Immediately.

The aforementioned season dates, bag limits and shooting hours will become effective on September 1, 2015 and extend through sunset on February 28, 2016.

Edwin "Pat" Manuel

Chairman



Chairman Manuel announced the next item, **to hear a Presentation of the effect of tidal flow through the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet on Lake Pontchartrain and its estuaries**, to be presented by Warren Delacroix, III.

Warren Delacroix, III advised that he has a passion for fishing, whether it's recreational or commercial. He has a marine business and does both recreational and commercial fishing. Since closure of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet ("Mr. Go"), Lake Pontchartrain ("the Lake") has been dwindling down to no fisheries at all. We don't crab in the Lake, we don't shrimp in the Lake, and catch very few speckled trout. The only few speckled trout that are caught now by recreational people are over by the bridges where you have a little tidal flow coming through by the Chef and the Rigolets which is affected a lot by the Pearl River. When the Pearl River dumps into Lake Borgne, the salinity is just about nothing – it's river water. Anything that can come into Lake Pontchartrain has to come through the Chef or the Rigolets. Since the closure of the channel, also known as the Great Wall, there's no tidal flow. I have been keeping documents of the tidal flow. I live in Bucktown and travel the Lake every day. You don't see a person fishing on the seawall. Lake Pontchartrain has been a heritage since the 1800s and has always been known for quality fish and shrimp. Now, it's non-existent. I started a petition to get an opening in the rocks. You are looking at close to 5,000 signatures that I have obtained. This is a very hot topic. This is not just a Lake thing, it's a whole estuary. Salinity is down and speckled trout will not lay eggs. The crab industry has suffered, the charter guys have suffered, and the shrimp fishermen have suffered. We have not shrimped in the Lake for three years. We have a serious problem and need to get biological data from the LDWF who has resources to do it. I want salinity data, water flow data, what's in the Lake, and what is causing the problem. For my tackle business, I used to buy 1,000 boxes of lures a year. I now buy only 100 boxes of lures in the past three years and can't sell tackle. The recreational people are not there. I am here today to seek help from LDWF as we have talked to other State agencies. The hold up is the State who has got control of the rocks. I have two independent contractors that will open up the rocks, free of charge. We are in a stalemate with CPRA. We need to get CPRA invested back with us in hopes that the Corps can get something going through Congress to open up the gates. I have the Corps reports, geological data, and letters written in the newspaper along with other numerous documents.

Mr. Delacroix also summarized his concerns in a recent letter to Billy Nungesser which stated: "As I was telling you at the last meeting, we have a serious **problem in Lake Pontchartrain and the estuaries**. Lake Pontchartrain, once a viable productive place to fish, now has **NO** fish, shrimp or crabs. Lake Pontchartrain has nothing in it but fresh water, and invasive salvinia grass clogging all the bayous from Delacroix Island to Lake Pontchartrain. We need tidal flow. We only have 6th's tidal range north of the wall and 1.6 to 2.0 feet south of the wall. There just isn't enough tidal flow to sustain saltwater species. The tide falls harder out of the Industrial Canal because fresh water from the rivers and the run off waters going into the lake. The fresh water diversions at the Violet canal are causing the salvinia grass problem in all the bayous and intercoastal canal leading to Lake Pontchartrain and Lake Borgne. The commercial harbor in Bucktown that FEMA spent millions on is a ghost town. Fishermen from Lake Pontchartrain and surrounding areas around the lake need to leave the lake to make a living. As a resident of Bucktown for 69 years, never did I have to leave the lake to make a living commercial fishing. The U.S. Corps of Engineers has created havoc on the fishing industry. Lake Pontchartrain has been known since the 1800's for producing the best blue crab in the nation. Our fleet and my business have suffered enough economic loss due to the closing of the Mr. GO! We need a simple gate or opening to allow controlled salt water to enter into the lake. A prime example is we get to fish every eight or nine days to catch a mere 130 lbs. of crabs on 600 crab traps. When the lake was viable, it produced many more crabs to be caught. Example on the same number for traps (600) and on a 3-day set, fishermen would catch 800 to 1000 lbs. of the best Louisiana Blue Crabs the nation has ever eaten. We have 20 years of data from the University of New Orleans/La. Wildlife and Fisheries showing 65% of the saltwater species used to enter Lake Pontchartrain thru the Industrial Canal, now there is nothing entering the lake. As a past board member of Louisiana Shrimp, Commissioner of the La. Wildlife and Fisheries,

commercial fisherman and owner of a marine hardware (Fisherman Net and Supply), I have dedicated my life to this industry. I have far seen the problem as it is now. I have made presentations to the proper authorities in the state and have not gotten a response from any state official or the Corps. We have thousands of people from recreational, commercial and charter captains who are all affected by the decision to close the Mr. Go off completely. This decision to close the Mr. Go should have had some public input. Taking action now is needed to save the dying lake. It won't be long before the lake is completely devastated. I'm not sure if it will ever be viable again. We must do something to save it now! We can't wait any longer. We have not had a productive shrimping season in Lake Pontchartrain since the last tropical storm/hurricane. This is a good example of why we need tidal flow. I invite any member of the Corps, public, or official of any agency on my boat to see the devastation first hand. Businesses along the Industrial Canal are suffering from no fishing activity. I appreciate anything you can do to save the lake and industry."

Chairman Manuel asked are you proposing that we give the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers authority again? You want to give it back to the Feds?

Mr. Delacroix responded that if the State does not have the money to build a set of locks or a gate, the only way that it could be done is back through Congress and this starts with the Corps. It would be a long process, but all we are proposing is opening of the rocks.

Commissioner Davis inquired whether any studies have been made regarding the removal of the rocks and installing a gate to raise the salinity levels? He also acknowledged that the hydraulics have changed in the entire estuary.

Chairman Manuel advised that we, as a Commission, cannot give a commitment today. The Commission can ask the Department to look into this and give us a report at a later date. Tidal information and historical data should be available and it's just a matter of assembling it.

Commissioner Broussard advised that these are different agencies involved with different control. The problem has to be identified first before any state or federal money is committed. The biological data probably exists.

Commissioner Courville suggested that at an upcoming Commission meeting that we get the department staff to present historical data. There is probably some baseline data indicating trends. We have to start somewhere and look at various items including: 1) where has the Lake been over the last 10-20 years, 2) how things have changed in that region since Mr. Go was built, 3) data before and after, and 4) data on when it was closed.

Commissioner Broussard summarized that all we can do at this point is advisory.

The floor was opened for public comments and **George Barisich** of the United Commercial Fisherman's Association advised that the only reason he is here today is to let you know that when this rock jetty was put up there, the commercial fishermen had requested an opening and we did not get it. Thank you very much for your help. It's really detrimental to the commercial fishermen. Any help you can give us, we will appreciate it.

There were no further comments or questions heard.



Chairman Manuel announced the next item, **to set the November 2015 Meeting Date**

A discussion took place and the meeting is set for November 5, 2015.

A motion for approval was made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Courville. Chairman Manuel called for a vote and the motion passed with no opposition.



Chairman Manuel announced the next item, **To Hear Public Comments,**

Harry Cook from Bernice, LA advised that he was here last year and spoke to your offices in North Louisiana. I want to talk about the hunting licenses. Last year, my wife and I go to buy hunting licenses and the first thing they said was that I was not in the system. After an hour, I got on the system and then we got our licenses, and here are our licenses. These are my wife's licenses. I've got two sets of them. I go to Missouri and here are my licenses from Missouri. I think some improvements could be made in the future on a better license (if you want to go into tagging situations), possibly trimming the size of the licenses. The next item I want to discuss is concern about game management areas in 28 parishes in North Louisiana from Alexandria, north of 165 Highway to Monroe to the Arkansas line to the Texas line. At one time, we had 300,000 acres of game management areas. Now, it has gotten down to somewhere around 45,000 acres. Now we have lost Union game management area. I understand that Jackson Bienville is next on the agenda. So, that leaves only Loggy Bayou and Bayou Pierre that are state-owned game management areas. Bayou Pierre was given to the Department free of charge. When I came down here, I was informed that there were some procedures going on to acquire some more acreage in game management areas. I called all the area offices, and they said they had no idea of any addition to game management areas. I think the Department could work with different companies to add to the game management area system. The game management area system today is working under the same guidelines that it did 65 years ago when it was initially started. I know that in the past, we had an area called Georgia Pacific that was a prime area up there and was coming up and going to be dropped. I called the office down there and they said it's their land and they can do whatever they want to do with it. A biologist up there, got with a guy named Charlie Burley with Georgia Pacific Corporation and went against status quo in Baton Rouge and got a 10-year lease renewed. A certain senator that we had up there, the best senator we've ever had, said that he was getting continual phone calls from Monroe, Morehouse, and West Carroll Parishes and they were thankful to have this area to hunt. So, I think with our land acquisition, some priorities ought to change with where game management areas should be. Last of all, I want to discuss turkey seasons. When turkey seasons first started, they adjusted the dates. It took 30 years of date adjusting before it was finally realized that we had gotten back to March 15th as an opening date. You, as a Commission, have more to do with the turkey populations and reproduction than any season. I don't want the State of Louisiana to wind up like Texas where they only have three counties open for the eastern birds, up around Oklahoma. In Arkansas and Texas, we have had low production. In setting the turkey season, I wish you would set the season on biological data rather than any political data. Thank you for your time.

There were no other comments heard.

There being no further business, Chairman Manuel **Adjourned** the meeting.

Pat Manuel, Chairman